



# The Public Records Advisory Council supports the passage of SB 500 A

May 12, 2021

Oregon State Legislature  
Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Co-Chairs Sen. Betsy Johnson, Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Rep. Dan Rayfield

Honorable Co-Chairs of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means,

The Public Records Advisory Council (PRAC) writes to **urge passage of SB 500, now in front of your Committee.**

SB 500 takes the next necessary step to continue Oregon's advances toward efficient and effective public records policy, a vital element of democracy.

The PRAC is made up of a balance of stakeholders with interest and expertise in public records, including local and state government representatives, members of the media and members of the public.

SB 500:

- Establishes the Public Record Advocate as an independent office within the executive branch, separate and distinct from any other state agency.
- Creates the authority and structure within the office to meet the statutory requirements of the office, specifically dispute resolution and statewide trainings in public records management.
- Grants responsibility to the PRAC, members of which are confirmed by the Senate, to hire the Advocate and should the need arise, terminate the Advocate's employment for cause as well.

Legislative analyses find no revenue impact. The fiscal impact is dependent on legislative budgetary action; structurally the bill moves the Public Records Advocate's Office budget from DAS to an independent budget for the Office while adding limited additional costs for standing up an independent office. SB 500 came to Ways and Means with a unanimous Do Pass recommendation from the Senate Committee on Labor and Business.

Members may remember that a similar bill, SB 1506, unanimously passed the Oregon Senate in the 2020 regular session. The House Rules Committee also recommended Do Pass, and the bill like many others was awaiting full House action when that session ended. Covid-19 and wildfire

emergencies rightly took precedence in the subsequent 2020 sessions. We now urge this Committee and the Legislature to pass SB 500 and continue to support government transparency for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Molly Woon, Office of The Secretary of State  
Michael Kron, Office of The Attorney General  
Adam Crawford, Office of the Oregon Department of Administrative Services  
Emily Harris, broadcast journalist, The Center for Investigative Reporting; Open Oregon board member  
Steve Suo, data editor, USA Today  
Les Zaitz, editor, Salem Reporter  
Scott Winkels, League of Oregon Cities  
Rob Bovett, Association of Oregon Counties  
Mark Landauer, Special Districts Association of Oregon  
Shirin Khosravi, public sector workforce representative  
Tony Hernandez, member of the public

cc: Co-Vice Chair Sen. Fred Girod  
Co-Vice Chair Rep. David Gomberg  
Co-Vice Chair Rep. Greg Smith  
General Government Sub-Committee Co-Chair Sen. Jeff Golden  
Senator Kim Thatcher  
Representative Karin Power